

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE ROBERTS AVE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION SITE

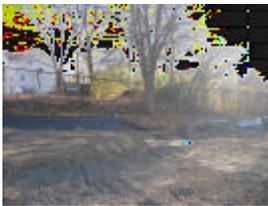
This fact sheet was written to give you information about the historic fill discovered at the Roberts Ave. Elementary School construction site in Danbury. The CT Department of Public Health and the Danbury Health Department are working with the Danbury Engineering and Public Works Departments as well as the CT Department of Environmental Protection on soil testing and plans for managing the fill. For more information, please contact us at the numbers provided on page 2.

BACKGROUND

In the Fall of 2007, construction began on the new Roberts Avenue School located on the site of the former Osborne Street Field between Osborne Street and Ellsworth Avenue. During the construction process, the contractor found a layer of fill on the site. The fill included ash, brick, asphalt, glass, wood and metal. Because of this discovery, the soils were tested for environmental contaminants. Lead, arsenic, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and mercury were found in the soil at higher than normal levels.



HOW WILL THE CONTAMINATION BE ADDRESSED? WILL PEOPLE BE SAFE?



According to the proposed Closure Plan, fill will be isolated from people using one of the following techniques: (1) placing it beneath the school building, (2) covering the fill with 12 inches of clean soil followed by 3 inches of asphalt, or (3) covering the fill with a geotextile marker layer, followed by 2 feet of clean soil and a grass layer or a poured rubber surface (for designated play areas). CTDEP and CTDPH have reviewed this plan and believe it will be effective in preventing exposure.

These actions will protect public health because it will isolate the contaminated historic fill from people who will be using the property. **As long as there is no direct contact with the contaminated fill, there is no possibility for exposure and no health risk.** In addition, the City will create an institutional control for this property to ensure that pavement and play surfaces are maintained into the future.

WHAT ABOUT THE NEARBY PROPERTIES?

The private properties next to the school site may have historic fill. It is necessary for the City to conduct soil testing on these properties to determine whether they have contaminated fill. If contaminated fill is found, the soil will be made safe in a way similar to the school construction site. Each owner must give the city permission before testing can happen.

WHAT ABOUT THE SITE CONTAMINANTS?

Four main chemicals were found in the soil at the site. Here is some general information about potential health effects. **This information is not meant to imply that the health effects mentioned below would occur from possible exposures at this site.**

Lead is a metal used to make many things, including batteries and metal products. In the past it was used in making paint. Exposure can harm the nervous system, particularly in children. Lead exposure in pregnant women can cause children to be born prematurely and have lower birth weights. Lead can also affect a child's mental and physical growth. Exposure to high levels of lead can affect the brain and kidneys of adults and children.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are a group of over 100 different chemicals that are formed when coal, oil and gas, garbage, or other organic materials like tobacco or charbroiled meat are burned. In animals, PAHs can affect the skin, blood, immune system and the ability to reproduce. These effects have not been reported in people. Some people who had long-term exposures to high levels of PAHs developed skin and lung cancer. Some PAHs cause cancer in animals.

Arsenic is found in nature at low levels. The major uses of arsenic are wood preservatives and agricultural pesticides. Arsenic is very widely distributed in the environment and everyone is exposed to low levels. Long-term exposure to arsenic can increase the risk of skin, bladder, kidney, liver, and lung cancer. Exposure to arsenic can also lead to skin effects such as irritation and skin darkening.

Mercury is a metal used in making many products including light bulbs, switches, batteries, and historically in Danbury, hats. It is also used in thermometers and dental fillings. Mercury can harm the nervous system in adults and children. Mercury can also be harmful to a developing fetus.

UNDERSTANDING EXPOSURES TO CHEMICALS

Any chemical that enters your body can be harmful if you take in too much. Whether your health will be affected by a chemical that gets into your body depends on several factors.

- How much of the substance you take in.
- How long you are exposed to it.
- How it enters the body (for example, through eating, drinking, breathing, or touching).
- Your age, general health and other individual traits.
- Other exposures you have to the same or similar substances.
- How toxic the substance is.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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